



Director of Central Intelligence

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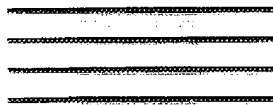
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SOUTH ASIA

Afghanistan:

Taliban Attacks Kabul

The assault began Tuesday night, and by early yesterday Taliban had captured Chahar Asiab, south of Kabul, according to press reports. This is the same area it took from opposition leader Hikmatyar in February; the next month it was routed by de facto Defense Minister Masood.

— Since it captured the western city of Herat early last month, Taliban has repeatedly threatened to attack Kabul if President Rabbani does not step down, *but the latest offensive nevertheless appears to have caught Rabbani and Masood unprepared.*

Seasoned government troops reportedly are mobilizing to counterattack. *Their ability to repel Taliban's offensive will depend on the loyalty of key commanders in the area and on whether opposition leaders Dostam and Hikmatyar support Taliban with attacks from the north and the east.*

— A Defense Ministry spokesman claims that Taliban's initial success was aided by a government commander who abandoned his post to the group. *Many of the group's victories have owed more to its ability to woo defectors than to military prowess.*

EUROPE

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